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Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean

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Chapter I
Introduction

1. By its resolution 68/24, the General Assembly, having taken note of the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean (A/68/29), requested the Chair of the Committee to continue his informal consultations with the members of the Committee and to report through the Committee to the Assembly at its seventieth session.

2. Pursuant to that resolution, the Committee held its formal session (456th meeting) on 22 July 2015 at United Nations Headquarters. The Chair also held a number of consultations and meetings during 2015.

3. At the 456th meeting, the following delegations made statements in the general discussion under agenda item 4: Australia, China, Russian Federation, Islamic Republic of Iran, Maldives, India and Indonesia.

4. The Committee is composed of the following States:

(a) 43 members:

Australia
Bangladesh
Bulgaria
Canada
China
Djibouti
Egypt
Ethiopia
Germany
Greece
India
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Iraq
Italy
Japan
Kenya
Liberia
Madagascar
Malaysia
Maldives
Mauritius
Mozambique
Netherlands
Norway
Oman
Pakistan
Panama
Poland
Romania
Russian Federation
Seychelles
Singapore
Somalia
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Thailand
Uganda
United Arab Emirates
United Republic of Tanzania
Yemen
Zambia
Zimbabwe

(b) Observers:

Nepal
South Africa
Sweden

5. Following elections to fill vacancies in the Bureau, the officers of the Committee were as follows:

Chair:

Amrith Rohan Perera (Sri Lanka)

Vice-Chairs:

Darren Hansen (Australia)
Ary Aprianto (Indonesia)
Bernardo Serage (Mozambique)

Rapporteur:

Héléna Bernadette Rajaonarivelo (Madagascar)

Chapter II
Work of the Committee in 2015

A. Adoption of the agenda

6. At its 456th meeting, the Committee adopted the agenda as contained in document A/AC.159/L.145, which read as follows:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Report of the Chair of the Committee pursuant to paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 68/24.
5. Adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its seventieth session.
6. Other matters.

B. Report of the Chair

7. At its 456th meeting, the Committee considered agenda item 4, concerning the report of the Chair of the Committee pursuant to paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 68/24. The Chair made the following comprehensive statement on his consultations:

"Distinguished members of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean,

"In 1971, the States and peoples of the Indian Ocean region came together in an endeavour to preserve their common interest in enhancing peace, security and stability in the region. The General Assembly declared the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace in its resolution 2832 (XXVI). A year later, in its resolution 2992 (XXVII), the Assembly implemented practical measures to further the objectives of the 1971 Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace by establishing the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean.

"The Indian Ocean, with its historic and strong connections to global security and commerce, has always assumed key geopolitical importance. The region is characterized by remarkable diversity in terms of economic strength, languages and cultures. The Indian Ocean is a lifeline for the littoral and hinterland States, and is vital for their security and sustainable economic growth. All our States assembled here have, no doubt, a stake in maintaining a peaceful and prosperous environment in the Indian Ocean region.

"The 'Indian Ocean as a zone of peace' was conceived in an environment of possible escalation of the arms race among great powers into the Indian Ocean area, with the potential to pose a serious threat to the maintenance of peace, security and stability in the region. Member States, in the adoption of resolution 2832 (XXVI), were convinced that the establishment of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean would contribute towards arresting such

developments, relaxing international tensions and strengthening international peace and security.

"Today, we have come a long way from the environment that prevailed during the cold war and in which the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean was first conceived and established. The geopolitical realities have certainly changed. However, the threats to peace and security in the Indian Ocean region have not disappeared, but are only undergoing a transformation. The security concerns that existed in the 1970s originated from the more traditional sources of inter-State rivalries, with the nuclear arms race being paramount. Today, the threats in the Indian Ocean region originate more from non-traditional sources, which include piracy, human trafficking, drug smuggling, trafficking of weapons, maritime pollution, climate change and illegal fishing activities, among others. The Indian Ocean is also at the crossroads of global markets where the world's rising powers are increasingly coming into contact. Therefore, the original mandate of the Committee continues to remain pertinent in order to ensure regional peace, security and economic growth.

"In the run-up to today's meeting, I undertook a series of informal consultations to ascertain the views of Member States on the work of the Ad Hoc Committee, including its future direction. I was heartened to hear that many were of the view that the core elements of the mandate of the zone of peace of ensuring peace and security of the Indian Ocean continues to be very much relevant today in the light of new threats and challenges. In my consultations, I was able to gather a broad sense that the new areas of concern in the Indian Ocean region, which have surfaced since the original mandate, must also be taken into account as we charter the future direction of our work. Maritime safety and security is a vital area, as it is the Indian Ocean that binds the Member States and is the lifeline for trade that is vital for the economic development of the region. Some of the specific issues highlighted were piracy, terrorism, ensuring the safety of the communications channels traversing the Indian Ocean and environmental concerns, such as sea level rise. The need to reinvigorate the work of the Committee, taking into account those new issues of concern, was underlined during my informal consultations.

"In recent times, the economic and military strength of the countries in the region has increased substantially. Initiatives such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation have provided a platform for cooperation among Member States and have an impact on the safety and security of the region. Of particular importance is the emergence of organizations such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association, which has been formed to ensure greater cooperation among States in the Indian Ocean region. It has particular significance in enhancing cooperation in maritime safety and security, among other things. It is in recognition of those developments that the General Assembly, in its resolution 68/24 adopted during its sixty-eighth session, noted the initiatives taken by countries of the region to promote cooperation, in particular economic cooperation, in the Indian Ocean area and the possible contribution of such initiatives to the overall objectives of a zone of peace.

"As became evident during my informal consultations, the potential of the zone of peace concept for enhancing economic cooperation, which could

contribute to the overall security and stability of the Indian Ocean region, should be explored, while retaining its primary disarmament focus.

"As we embark on the post-2015 sustainable development goals, the security and stability of the oceans becomes an essential prerequisite for their effective implementation. For instance, goal 14, to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, envisages the full implementation of measures for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources in terms of applicable international legal instruments, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982, as well as existing regional and international regimes.

"Distinguished members of the Ad Hoc Committee,

"As you are aware, the Ad Hoc Committee is now mandated to meet biennially. In its resolution 68/24, adopted at its sixty-eighth session, in 2013, the General Assembly considered that greater efforts and more time were required to develop a focused discussion on practical measures to ensure conditions of peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region.

"You would also recall that in resolution 68/24, the Assembly reiterated its conviction that the participation of all permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee is important and would greatly facilitate the development of a mutually beneficial dialogue to advance peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region.

"It is my intention to carry out widest the possible consultations with all Member States, keeping those elements in mind, in order to report to the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I would encourage the continuous engagement of Member States in the process of determining the future direction of our work, through the adoption of a consensual approach to issues at hand.

"A mutually beneficial dialogue among all Member States would contribute to the enhancement of peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean."

8. During the meeting, an exchange of views was held on a range of issues relating to the work of the Committee.

9. The Committee reaffirmed the continuing relevance of its mandate in the light of new threats and challenges confronting the region. The importance of organizations such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association was viewed as being of particular significance in enhancing cooperation in maritime safety and security. The need for Member States to continue their engagement in the process was also emphasized, with a view to determining the future direction of the work of the Committee. The Committee reaffirmed its commitment to the realization of the goals of peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region.

10. The Committee remained convinced that the participation of all permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users in the work of the Committee was important and would assist the progress of a mutually beneficial dialogue aimed at developing conditions of peace, security and stability in the region.

C. Recommendations

11. The Chair was requested to continue informal consultations with the members of the Committee and to report through the Committee to the General Assembly at its seventy-second session.

D. Adoption of the report of the Committee

12. At the 456th meeting, the Rapporteur introduced the draft report of the Committee.

13. At the same meeting, the Chair informed the members of the Committee of his intention to hold informal consultations concerning the text of the draft resolution to be submitted to the General Assembly at its seventieth session.

14. Also at the same meeting, the Committee adopted its report.

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